

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

For the

State of Delaware, Division for the Visually Impaired

MEETING MINUTES

September 11, 2017 9:30am - 1:00pm

Location: Smyrna Rest Area

5500 DuPont Pkwy. Smyrna, DE 19977

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kevin McAllister, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:40 am.

II. ROLL CALL

Kevin McAllister (Chair), Elisha Jenkins Director, Dr. Debbie Harrington (DVI Deputy Director), Sonya Lawrence (Member) teleconference, Deborah Bradl (DVI) teleconference, (Shirley Bryson (DVI), Jill Morrison (DVI) teleconference, Suzanne Howell (Member) teleconference, Carma Carpenter (Teleconference, Member), Grisel Espinosa (DVI), Lloyd Schmitz (Teleconference, Public), Darryl Garner (Teleconference, Member).

III. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VRAC MEETING

The minutes for the meeting June 12, 2017 need to be reviewed before they are approved.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. White Cane Day- Mr. McAllister asked about the logistics and programing, day chosen for the White Cane Day observance in October. Deb Bradl reported that the event is Friday October 20, 2017 on the DHSS Campus Vendors and a Speaker need to be secured. Mr. McAllister is concerned that a meeting took place concerning White Cane Day but without members from VRAC. The VRAC Chair feels the chapel is not an optimal place, especially for consumers traveling from the south. Ms. Jenkins added the time to do more than one day type of

event and because DVI has more events program at the same day. The division is working with some elected officials to attend, and is planning to be able to help the consumers moving from one place to the other. There is not an agenda at this time and Deb is working on a plan where VRAC will work with Alice Johnson to contact the vendors. Mr. McAllister added the name and number of vendors is needed and is difficult have a speaker without a specific day and budget or resources. The Chair asked if any council members had comments. No comments from the members.

B. Annual Report- Mr. McAllister stressed the importance of getting the annual report before the year end and starting the new one immediately after because of how long the process takes.

C. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment – Mr. McAllister suggested to meet with the consultants, the survey questions and the focus group questions need to be redone. The current version is a pdf when word is a more appropriate. Ms. Lawrence added the October 20 activities will be a good time to have the consumer to complete the survey. Mr. McAllister stated that we need to focus on receiving feedback from consumers and cautioned against data from incorrect questions. Ms. Bradl added that the focus groups are fine but the other piece is incorrect. We need to meet with the consultants to be sure they understand. Mr. McAllister and Ms. Jenkins will work together on the annual retreat including a Town Hall meeting for next year to be submitted. Council members to have trainings to represent the agency.

V. NEW / SPECIAL BUSINESS

VI. DVI Administrator Report

Administrator Report – Ms. Bryson reported the following data 9/10/2017:

- 288 caseload
- 17 successful closures
- 28 Individuals who are ready to work
- 19 employed less than 90 days employed
- 67 currently in a training program
- 94 are transition age 14-21 years old
- 115 transition aged 14-24 years old

Partnerships

- **FedCap-** Partner is working to secure employment for consumers that completed APS custodial Training.
- **Bright Spot Ventures-** Cultivating business relationship.

Consumer Success Stories

The transition counselors provided opportunities for 5 visually impaired students to tour the Comcast Accessibility lab in Philadelphia. They attended a demonstration of the lab and some accessible technology. Joel Moffatt is a visually impaired employee at Comcast. Mr. Moffatt provided a detailed account of his career path to the students. They also were provided an opportunity to speak to David Goldfield, a visually impaired contractor. Tom Wiodkowski a blind employee provided the students with a detailed summary of an accountant's career path. The day was very informative and a lot of fun. The students really enjoyed their visit with the staff at Comcast.

One of our transition students completed her last day as an office assistant with the NCC summer job program. She was an office assistant at De La War State Service Center. Also one of our transition students completed a summer job at Delaware Park as well as another one of our transition students completed summer job as an assistant at C&D Senior Center.

Staff development

Terry Donovan from WINTAC, the training arm of our federal funding source, provided a two day training on WIOA performance measures. The entire Division for the Visually Impaired VR team were provided insight on the new performance measurements and all the changes. The team was really engaged in learning about the changes in WIOA. They were really interested in hearing how it impacted their workflow and services to consumers.

DVI Directors report

Welcome Debbie Harrington to DVI:

Delaware Industries for the Blind:

The Production Department continues to fulfill Federal contractual orders for USGS. The Federal neckerchief obligation was completed on July 29th. DIB continues to fulfill the USGS contract until the National Industries for the Blind can transition this contract to another agency.

No additional orders beyond these fulfillment obligations have been taken. Fulfillment orders taken during this reporting period totaled 19 orders and \$13,587.97 in sales.

Additional Information for this reporting period:

- The DIB clearance sale is still in progress, and has brought in \$3,800.00 to date.
- DIB's financial situation is on the upswing. The majority of its outstanding debt has been resolved. This does not include the funds received as a loan from the Department
- Meetings continue to occur with USGS/NIB regarding the transition of the contract.

BEP:

What began as a pilot initiative has grown into a huge success for both the Campus employees as well as the food truck vendors. The feedback from employees on the healthy and traditional food offerings, as well as the food truck vendors themselves; and the feedback from the food truck vendors on the employees they have served, has been nothing but positive! Two new healthy-option food truck vendors have joined the Holloway Campus during this reporting period; Delicious Craving and Gonzo's Kitchen. At this time, this now provides the Campus with food truck service provision five days a week. The response from employees and visitors has been extremely positive. The pilot period ended as of August 31. Beginning in October, 10% revenues shall be collected for the previous month for deposit into the Business Enterprise Program's account in accordance with the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act to further enable blind individuals the opportunity for self-employment through food service venues.

Smyrna Rest Area Agreement is progressing. Final Contract is in its final stages.

100% of the non-assigned BEP Operator state vending machines have been supplemented with healthy-choice food options as of July 1. Analytical data depicting sales of these options for June; (for those machines which were stocked with healthy food-choice options prior to July 1) is being analyzed. Monthly data shall continue through September with a cumulative quarterly analysis being supplied by Canteen in early to mid-October. A review of product sales and options going forward will occur over the next 30 days.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

During Mission Transition, a Vocational Rehabilitation Intern facilitated a budgeting "game" for our students, "Game of REAL Life." Ten students participated in the event this year, making it the largest to date. Students learned the importance of networking, researching, using and being reliable resources, budgeting, controlling their social

media footprint, college costs, living expenses, credit, loans, interest, realistic salary expectations, and more. The class was well received.

Independent Living Services:

Independent Living Services team members facilitated four sessions of DVI's Summer Skills Academy. Instruction was provided the areas of money management and clothing management, a discussion about adaptive sports including beep baseball, goalball and the Delaware Association for Blind Athletes (DABA), rockwall climbing, a session of descriptive yoga, technology demonstrations, emergency preparedness, a tour of the Minquadale Fire House, an officer friendly visit from a New Castle County police officer, an activity on assembling an emergency kit and a skill review session. The Independent Living Team participated in a training on bioptic devices for drivers who are visually impaired. The training was facilitated by Ann Connell, a rehabilitation driving instructor. She discussed the process of obtaining bioptics, consumer eligibility requirements and the pre-driver readiness skills that prospective bioptic drivers should possess.

As "A Matter of Balance" Fall Prevention Program approaches, Melodye and Jean discussed home modifications, cognitive thinking strategies, and exercises that help decrease the risk of experiencing a devastating fall. They plan to offer the evidence-based program to visually impaired individuals later in the year.

The President's Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) budget proposed a new grant program entitled Partnerships for Innovation, Inclusion, and Independence (PIII). This new program would combine the activities carried out by the State Developmental Disabilities Councils (DDC), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC) and Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Councils (TBIAC) into a single state grant program by forming a statewide, cross-disability entity. If it eliminates IL-B funding, the funding for the SILC, the DVR IL program, and the DVI funding (the 15% of what comes in from ACL) will be eliminated. This will also impact funding to Blindsight's programs funded by DVR.

Education:

During the last week in July, 24 students traded in their traditional classroom setting for a unique outdoor learning experience, Camp Abilities Delaware 2017. Students spent the week at Killen's Pond State Park participating in a variety of activities that addressed the common core curriculum and highlighted the Expanded Core Curriculum (skills and knowledge that sighted students acquire by casually and incidentally observing and interacting with their environment).

Some students even compared and contrasted their technology devices and could be heard trying to persuade their peers try something new!

Self-advocacy skills were strengthened as students practiced how to communicate the strategies and adaptive equipment they utilized at camp and would enable them to

participate in recreation and leisure activities in both their schools and community alongside their peers.

Independent Living Skills were practiced on a daily basis as students learned about the personal choices they can make in order to for their bodies and mind to develop in healthy ways. Students prepared their own lunches, participated in personal hygiene lessons and developed goals suited to their personal strengths and challenges.

The park environment challenged our students to utilize visual efficiency and orientation and mobility skills in new and creative ways. The student navigated trails, rutted pathways, grassy, sandy, and paved terrains. They discussed how they access their school and community environments and the similarities and differences of a park setting.

Camp Abilities Delaware provided our students experiences and opportunities where they were able to perform all the tasks and functions, in accordance with their abilities, that will enable them to lead lives as independently as possible. Additionally, Camp Abilities Delaware provided us all with cherished memories that will last a lifetime.

Communication & Outreach:

A meeting was held with the Microsoft store to discuss hosting an event to educate visually impaired consumers on accessibility and new technology built into Windows 10 and Microsoft Office programs. Microsoft has also developed a way to access accessible Microsoft applications with Apple products. During the meeting, it was suggested that DVI and Microsoft develop a 'Workshop Series' as opposed to a one day event. Microsoft agreed and are willing to pay for transportation for those coming from Kent and Sussex Counties. Although all details need to be finalized, we agreed to offer the series during the month of October; as not only will this coincide with White Cane Day, but October is Microsoft's month dedicated to community service. As details are finalized, updates will be provided.

Several videos are being produced to highlight services and customers. Filming that includes B-roll and interviews have taken place in New Castle County, Milford and at Camp Abilities, the NFB BELL academy, Orientation and Mobility, and several 1:1 interviews.

Strategic Planning Meeting:

On Wednesday August 2, DVI and members of the community gathered to begin initial strategic planning. The purpose of the convening was to collaborate as a team to incorporate our best ideas, seek to understand the different points of view involved, identify common goals and shared needs, explore and prioritize opportunities, for the future. While there are requirements of state plans for some programs and strategic plans for others, the goal is to combine where possible and prioritize to more efficiently

use the resources available. Once the goals are combined, the group will prioritize and organize into workgroups to set and achieve agreed upon benchmarks.

VII. Announcements/public Comments:

DVI Workshop at Blind Sight Independent Learning (Darry's Garner's Karaoke Kitchen).

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. McAllister adjourned the meeting at 11:21am

Respectfully Submitted,

Grisel Espinosa